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THE RED TRAIL
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

A. NELLE JARVIS





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DEDICATED
TO
MY DEAR FRIEND AND TEACHER
MRS. HULST



*I love thee not for the charms alone
That linger along the years,
But I love thee for the charms that flee,
Rose of the dawn and breath of the sea,
Laughter and gleam of tears.*

INTRODUCTION

POETRY is the art by which its creator embodies his best insight and passion in melodious words, fit to carry his own inspiration to others, and as I have seen the production of the poems in this little volume, a sincere and natural expression of the sympathies and aspirations, the hopes and fears awakened in a nature that is growing in insight and power from day to day, I have wished that what was achieved by the one might become an inspiration to all others who are footing the "red trail" of humanity. There is a universal element in this art.

The author of these poems is a girl of seventeen who is just finishing her high school course,

and, as Longfellow beautifully phrases it, is

Standing with reluctant feet
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet,
Gazing, with a timid glance,
On the brooklet's swift advance
On the rivers broad expanse,

and feeling that she must soon leave the shelter of the valley and climb the steep mountain side. Miss Jarvis has been most fortunate in having the sympathy of her father, the Rev. R. E. L. Jarvis, D. D. Dr. Jarvis has not only appreciated and encouraged her production of this work, but has rewarded her effort by the publication of these poems as her graduation gift—a fitter reward could hardly be devised.

—MRS. HENRY HULST

THE RED TRAIL OF HUMANITY

THE red trail, the hard trail, the trail of blood
and tears,
A long and steep and rocky way, beset by count-
less fears—
But ever morning's glory pales the shadows of
the night.
God, will they choose to take the way that leads
them to the light,
The red trail, the sure trail, the trail of con-
quered days?
From camps of ease I see them take the wild
and tortuous ways.

THE DREAMER OF DREAMS

THE dreamer of dreams treads the echoless shore;
Unlighted, his barque moves out on the deep,
Nor white hands that beckon nor soft eyes that weep
Deter the sure stroke of his swift-moving oar.

Through slow-shifting mists to the lands lying far,
Where the wing of the sky dips blue in the wave,
The uncharted wastes cover many a grave—
Has the heart of the sailor forgotten his star?

The voices of sirens rise sweet from the reeds
Of pale, floating isles, in divine melodies—
Will they lure the poor heart to devouring seas?—
They invite the brave heart to undying deeds.

Cruel wreckage of days fills the perilous years
And up from the pitiless plains of the sea
Low thoughts of the world flame luridly—
For the piloted barque the deep has no fears.

My Watchman! Thou hearest the harbor bells toll—
Are the tempests and tides, and the terrors all past?
On the desert of waters day cometh at last
And with it the home-coming flight of the soul.

A HEART ON THE WING

A HEART on the wing is a weary thing,
A-roaming, a-roaming,—
A heart of flame and cloud and dust,
A heart a-wing because it must,
A-roaming.

A heart on the wing is a lonely thing,
A-roaming, a-roaming,—
A homeless heart, companion of pain,
A joyless heart, its love in vain
A-roaming.

A heart on the wing is a bitter thing,
A-roaming, a-roaming,—
A heart tormented by passion's fears,
A heart pursued by wasted years,
A-roaming.

I will lay me down by the thorn and die,
And thou, vain heart, in dust shall lie,
To break at last, who did Heaven defy
A-roaming.

THE HEART'S ANSWER

O HEART, be still from ever restless roaming
Dwell in content by reaches of the sea,
Nor try thy wings o'er unknown waters foaming
Their weary length between the goal and thee.

The Heart's Answer:

Beneath the dawn I hear the wild swan calling
As southward, ever southward bends his flight;
Within the dusk I see the red star falling—
A heaven lost to win a path of light;

Far out beyond, wild waters dash them heavenward
Seeking the sky and immortality,
And skies unfettered bend then sighing earthward
To weep themselves at last into the sea.

For love, for life, for victory and glory,
O child of man, I seek the unknown shore,
And in the purple shadows find my story
Or sink, with crippled wing, to fly no more.

A QUIET HEART

A QUIET heart I found one day
Where gentle valleys wander down
From blue hills misting far away,
Beyond the sight of mart and town.

I found it where the sunset gold
Lay opal-barred on ledge and lea,
And for the sake of grief grown old
I carried home the heart with me.

And yet I feared the gentle thing
Would scarcely linger with me long,
For quiet hearts are wont to sing,
And I had lost the joy of song.

I bore it through the strife of day,
Through troubled watches of the night,
Where men for greed forget to pray
And little children weep for light.

And lo! a strange and wondrous thing—
Where'er the hand of love was laid
My quiet heart began to sing,
And ever close beside me stayed.

The sunsets vanish from the hills,
The valleys wander to the sea,
But love lies close, and singing still
My quiet heart abides with me.

WINGS OF CONTENT

ON wings of content I joyful rise
 To sing my matin song—
On wings of content to Eastern skies,
Where the smile of dawn is a fresh surprise
 To a heart grown sudden strong.

On wings of content I seek my day,
 Whether of joy or woe.
On wings of content, all fear at bay,
Victor I speed down the lengthening way,
 Choosing to sing as I go.

VICTORY

A CONQUEROR I, with power of heart and mind
To rule men's hearts, and mine—
A conqueror bold, who wrestles with the storm,
Winning the victory fine.

I cast no backward glance: my feet on earth,
My eyes seek out the glow
Of stars, where hope springs ever fresh to birth.
With face upturned I go—

Free as the wing of singing birds at dawn,
Above the brightening seas;
Pure as the wild sea-foam that swept along
The prows of argosies;

Strong as the heart of man, by passion's lash
Sped on to victory;
Free from all power in heaven or earth to bind
My soul's immensity.

TELL US OF LOVE

TELL us of Love—

“Tears,” sighed the wind, “till the close of day.”
And the hedges brown with their empty nests
Wept in the mist for the loving breasts
The winter had driven away.

Tell us of Love—

“Gain,” cried the world, “and passion’s embrace,”
And it mocked, as the lovers of life swept by
Over the graves where they soon should lie
In the ashes of love’s disgrace.

Tell us of Love—

“Peace,” sang the heart, “in the firelight’s glow,”
A man’s whole faith and a woman’s trust;
The prayers of a child; a life or a crust
Shared with a soul brought down to the dust;
The smile of a friend, the heart of a foe,
And God in the silence whispering low.

FRIENDSHIP—A SELECTION

CONSTANT as is the widowed dove;
Humble as maiden that loves in vain;
Holy as hermit's vesper strain;
Gentle as is the breeze that dies,
Blithe as the leaves stirred by its sighs;
Lovely as is the sun's bright ray
At mid-day on an August day.

MY WISH—TO A FRIEND

I WOULD thee loved me as the mist
Is loved by the ardent day—
So nature chaineth fleeting passion,
And e'en from change and death doth fashion
Love that loves always.

FOR YOU

THE stars shine bright in the evening sky,
The soft winds of night so gently sigh,
Though all is calm, the very blue
Seems to be callin', dear, for you!

I hear it in the gentle brook
That winds through woods and fragrant nook,
I see it written in the blue—
Dear one, we're longin' so for you!

I feel that in each passing breeze
And every stir of rustlin' leaves
There's something callin',—oh so true!—
I wonder if it's not for you?

The friendly moon, though shining still
Above the crest of yonder hill,
Yet seems to grieve, as we all do,
Just longin' for a sight of you!

Come back again to me, my dear,
Come back and wipe away the tear
That every hour I shed anew,
While just a-longin', dear, for you!

MY AWAKENED HARP

I PRAYED for passion and a song—
My gift was pain and tears
And vista of dull years
Down wind-swept paths, along
A waste as passionless
As innocence untouched by wrong.

Faith wrested passion out of pain—
It tuned to winds that blew
My listless harp, and drew
From tempests such refrain
Of victory that joyous years,
Now golden-voiced, still chant the strain.

PEARLS

OUR hidden thought flows on, so swift, so strong,
By night's melodious fingers swept along
The harp of life—it seems at times a strain
Of magic music, wrought of tears and song.

And all the while the far-off waters roll,
And sound of chant and solemn bells a-toll
Disturb the dreaming of the sea-lapped shell—
Are they lamenting a departed soul?

I only know that life must have its grief
As earth its rain, for growing time is brief;
Love honors pain with tender ministry
And gives for tears the calm of sure belief.

I only know that passion flames and grows
Until the breath of heaven on it blows,
And heaven's tears unpearl the burning grief
As drops of dew the heart of the red rose.

Oh, that the joy of life should pain outlast!
The swollen tide sweeps on, but skies o'ercast
Cannot withhold the sudden gleam that shores
Our grief as pearls upon the sea-beach cast.

OPPORTUNITY

THOUGH close beside thee shines the Open Door,
Thou, laggard heart that will not seek the goal,
Of God's free gifts on this His great highway,
Thou, loiterer by the way, demanding toll,

I'll flame thee with the bribe of love and wealth,
I'll scourge thee, heart, I'll drive thee to thy task;
A little strength thou hast, I do not ask
That thou shouldst reach the goal before the day is done.

Nay, set no demons on my track,
Nor send me flushed with wine and stained with vice
Across the glory of the Open Door—
Who enters there must offer sacrifice.

Strip me of earth, that freely I may run
And clean of stain along the King's highway;
Place on my brow the wreath of heroes won,
Then will I show at eve a conquered day.

SHADOW OF TURNING

DAWN her breath across the mountains blew at morn,
Dropped her golden circlet on the brow of Day,
Hope his clarion trumpet sounded, men new-born
Challenged life to combat on the way.

Soon all was still:
Day's light had fled
In shadow of turning.

Love at dawn among the glories walked, and smiled;
Love at noon her burden found too great, and sighed;
Love at eve red poppies twined, O pale and wild
Wove her wreath beside a fireless heart, and died.

Saddest of all
When love lies dead
In shadow of turning!

"Give us, God," I grieved, "a gift divine for men,
Changeless, changing hearts to comfort and to save"—
Lilies, silent, beckoned lilies bright with heaven,
Swayed their golden depths to show a cross and open
O best of all! [grave.
In love of God
No shadow of turning!

THE WATERS OF QUIET

MY heart passes swift through the flame to the strand,
Where the rivers of quiet run soft through the land,
Through desert and quicksand and place of dull pain
The waters of quiet flow softly.

Like splash of sweet fountain to ears growing dull,
Like pools of clear water where white fingers cull
The red rose, the white rose, the rose without thorn,
The waters of quiet flow softly.

I seek them through perils of untravelled seas,
I breathe but their name in the garden of ease;
For a pure heart, a foul heart, a hot heart that grieves
The waters of quiet flow softly.

Fair fountains of youth from the lap of the hills,
Sweet, oh sweet waters, your melody thrills
The weary, the vanquished, the fighters for God—
Oh, waters of quiet, flow softly!

THE WORDS OF HIS PATIENCE

"**T**HOU hast kept my Patience,"—softly runs the measure,
Written in the glory of an ancient day,
Written with the passion men bring back from visions,
Wisdom gleaned from angels talked with by the way.

"Thou hast kept my Patience,"—O the old, old story
Running golden-worded through the length of days,
Sung by conquered forests, toned by boundless oceans,
Echoed from the passes of countless mountain ways.

"We have kept His Patience,"—still the singers chant it,
Ashen faces lifted from their beds of pain,
Singing in the shadow of the darkened valley,
Faint and weak from toiling on the burning plain.

"We have kept His Patience,"—louder grows the burden,
Swelling into paean as the ages roll,
Paeon sung by angel choir, choir of the immortals,
Those who overcame the world, the heavens now enroll.

JUDGMENT

THREE souls at eve went wandering far
 Into the dusk with the evening star;
And one was black with passion and hate,
And one was pale with wasted days,
And one, so burdened with life and fate
It trembled and shrank from heavenly ways.

Three souls together sped after the dawn,
Ever beyond in the Eastern skies,
Winging with hope 'till they falter and sink
And tremble in fear on a fateful brink
Bounding a shadowless realm and still,
A land where a God is Lord of the Will.

Three souls bend low at the judgment seat,
Heavy upon them the hand of fate.
Then spoke a voice, deep, strong, yet sweet,
Free from all guile, free from all hate:

“Thou who hast yielded to passion and hate,
Forcing Death's bars in thy lust for light,
Go back to the earth, and there mediate

Judgment—Continued.

'Twixt me and the hearts who with such might
Destroyed thy fair honor—O love shall efface
Passion's dark blot, and anguish make white
In the grind of the mill the stain of disgrace.

"And thou, pale spirit of profitless days,
Ghost of earth's cycle of pleasure and ease,
Sink to the grave where thy body betrays
Its poor worthless dust; for wine on the lees
The earth be the cup; perchance through the days
Of darkness, and horror, and grief multiplied,
Tears of repentance shall steal through the mold
And Heaven's eucharist—be a soul purified.

"And thou, sad soul of a weary day,
Burdened with thoughts that efface the stars,
The defeats of earth are heaven's gains,
And struggle and pain the gold of her way.
Hell is thyself—although still unperfected—
Heaven, the guerdon setting thee free
From trammels of earth, with faith resurrected,
And courage new-winged in liberty."

WINTER

COME, come with me, the winter woods are sleeping,
The violet and the windflower lie buried 'neath the snow,
Steadfast and calm the hills their watch are keeping,
And soft within their icy walls the quiet waters flow.

Come, come with me—Oh, call it not sad dying!
Death loves not dreams where life throbs full and strong;
Hope hears the heart within the pine trees sighing
And murmur of the spring in the red bird's song.

Come, come with me, the sunset glory lingers,
Folding its radiance o'er our common day,
Earth flames to heaven as touched by angel fingers,
Lifting before us a new and radiant day.

SPRING

THE spring has come, the glad, glad spring!
The very trees with music ring,
The bluebird calls it from the sky.
The robin sings it from on high.
The mists from far out on the sea
Shroud all the land in mystery,
But let no mist fear to thee bring,
Be glad, oh heart, for now 't is spring!

THE VEILS OF DAWN

"As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

OH, the Veils of Dawn on gossamer days,
Spun on the bending grass,
Scented with breath of pale moon-flowers,
Sparkling with jewels, the evening hours
Drop softly as they pass.

Oh, the Veils of Dawn on gossamer days,
Caught by the sighing breeze,
Pale as a breath on the frost-bound air,
Light as the step of Pan in his lair
At the foot of moss-grown trees.

Oh, the veils of Dawn on gossamer days,
Breath of long hours of toil,
Lost in the vastness of wind-swept space,
Vanished, but leaving a gentle grace
To rest on the day's turmoil.

SILENCE AND MEMORY

TELL me, where does silence dwell?
Not in the wood, not in the dell
Where flows the flashing, dashing brook,
Singing its way from mossy nook,
Where, oh where does silence dwell?

Tell me, where does memory keep
Vigil lone, when soft-eyed sleep
Flees the dusk, and one by one
Evening stars forget their song?
Where does memory vigil keep?

I will tell—in the heart of a rose
Love is born when the May wind blows,
And over the grave where love lies deep,
Dead with the rose, afar from sleep,
Silence and memory vigil keep.

A BREATH OF REMEMBRANCE

A BREATH of remembrance—shall it rest
In light of dawn upon her way,
Fluttering promise of victory
Across the page of an unknown day?

A breath of remembrance—it shall rise
When moons burn out and stars are fled
And the rush and roar of fevered day
Their swirling waters about her spread.

A hush, a whisper, a face to the sky,
The old, old wish of a heart set free,
And out of the storm that is hurrying by—
A breath of remembrance for her and me.



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